

## Sustainable Economy Working Group (“SEWG”) Minutes of Wednesday March 1, 2012 Meeting

1. **Present:** Mike Norman, Estelle Record-Stanley, Jen Mazer, Paul Bernstein, Susan Labandibar, Terra Friedrichs, Wes Nickerson, Deborah Butler
2. **Facilitating:** Mike
3. **Meet & Greet:** One new attendee:
  - Deborah Butler, Consumer-interest registered lobbyist
4. **Report-backs and Announcements –**
  - **“WORC’N Brunch”** – a fundraising meal this coming Sunday (March 25<sup>th</sup>) at 24 Webster Ave. in Somerville, to help people attend the national conference of Worker-Owned Companies, which will take place in Boston June 22-24 – <http://american.coop/content/worcn-holding-fundraising-brunch-2012-usfwc-conference> .
  - **Social Enterprise Working Group** – Estelle & Terra announced this OccupyBoston working group had conducted its first meeting. Its minutes are at [http://wiki.occupyboston.org/wiki/Social\\_Enterprise\\_Meeting\\_Notes\\_2-22-12](http://wiki.occupyboston.org/wiki/Social_Enterprise_Meeting_Notes_2-22-12)
  - **“Occupy May 1<sup>st</sup>”** – Deborah handed out flyers for this upcoming nationwide event, with a Boston presence.. Information at <http://www.occupymay1st.org/members/occupymayfirst/activity/>
  - **Climate Action Working Group** – Wes said this group would be making its presence felt at Sen. Scott Brown’s office on March 5<sup>th</sup> .
  - **“Democracy School”** – Terra told us this training program for effective local control over corporate behavior was held last weekend (end of February) -- <http://celdf.org/section.php?id=6> . And future sessions can be arranged.
  - **“Women Entrepreneurs Making a Difference”**-- Susan spoke as part of this panel at Suffolk Univ on Feb. 28<sup>th</sup> to executives – [www.suffolk.edu/50374.html](http://www.suffolk.edu/50374.html) . She was pleased and surprised that her “radical” speech was welcomed.
  - **“Strategies for a New Economy”** conference will take place June 8-10 at Bard College (across the Massachusetts border in New York state) -- <http://neweconomicsinstitute.org/conference> . Many experts from the US and Britain will be speaking. Susan will be attending, and encourages others to make the same journey.
5. **Direct Action: ‘Buycotts & Boycotts’** – In line with our mission to increase sustainable economy in the Greater Boston area, we developed further our strategy for mobilizing Occupy members and the general public **to direct their normal shopping towards companies that behave according to the Occupy movement’s values** of positive impact on the Community, the Environment, and Employees.
  - a. We began assessing the several “rating agencies” people had kindly posted on our website -- [http://wiki.occupyboston.org/wiki/Sustainable\\_Economy\\_Rating\\_Groups](http://wiki.occupyboston.org/wiki/Sustainable_Economy_Rating_Groups) . From that list we want to select the raters which will indicate to us *reliably* which local businesses are actually behaving according to the OccupyBoston values. As a preliminary set of criteria by which to select such agencies, we agreed:
    1. That the **actual purpose controlling each rating agency** must be in line with our values and mission.
    2. That the rating agency must make **actual on-site inspections** of the relevant businesses **at least once every year**.
    3. That the business must make **observable behaviors** which give priority to **positive Local impacts**: by its hiring, by its purchasing, by its ways of expanding. (This list of observable behaviors is to grow during our next meeting).
    4. That the business be **environmentally progressive** in its **use of energy**, and by its construction and/or outfitting of its building (so that it approaches, or has already achieved, LEED certification -- <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=1988> ).

- b. At our next meeting (*Thursday March 22<sup>nd</sup> – details given at the end of these minutes*), we want to complete this list of criteria for selecting the rating agencies we'll rely upon during the first months or first year of our recommendations to the local buying public.
- c. Please add more rating agencies that you know of, to our list at [http://wiki.occupyboston.org/wiki/Sustainable Economy Rating Groups](http://wiki.occupyboston.org/wiki/Sustainable_Economy_Rating_Groups)
- d. In order to encourage other businesses (who don't yet behave according to OccupyBoston values) **to make local development their high priority**, we're contacting organizations who have similar action-goals:
  - 1. Mike met with the Boston Mayor's Office of Business Development, and will be liaising with their **"Main Streets" program** in Jamaica Plain to help us reach both consumers and businesses.
  - 2. He's proposed the following pledge for local businesses to commit to. (Those businesses would then be rewarded by our encouraging hundreds of consumers to shop at their stores):

**Business Local Re-Investment Pledge**

I agree to make a concerted effort to create jobs in my community by re-investing in other local businesses. To do that, I commit to taking at least 2 of the following actions:

- a. Banking with a local bank
- b. Choosing local and independent vendors when my business purchases products and services
- c. Promote local sourcing by other businesses, by my joining a pro-local business association."

- e. Susan will draft text for leaflets that consumers can give to their local businesses, to encourage the business to take this pledge.
- f. Also, as one positive way **to prevent the destruction of local business** by such "big-box stores" like Walmart, we're exploring ways to use this Local Re-investment Pledge as a standard by which others could evaluate Walmart. So that instead of towns automatically granting permits to Walmart, they'd require Walmart to change its policies that harm local businesses and local economy. The following perspective is one example for how to approach our towns about this:

"Right now up to **twice as much** of every dollar spent at a local business **stays in the community**, supporting local charities and creating jobs at other locally-owned businesses. Not only does the number of local jobs increase, but those jobs give workers the opportunity to learn and thrive in ways big-box stores currently do not. If Walmart really cares about local communities, then they will commit to supporting local businesses. If local businesses can do it, why can't Walmart?"

[MN/PB/...]

And we're exploring ways to partner with other organizations already concerned about Walmart's possible arrival, such as *"Jobs-with-Justice"*.

- g. Deborah urged us to remain clear that as a Working Group we are "talking **with**, but not talking **for** OccupyBoston". A decision by the General Assembly is of course still required before our messages to consumers or businesses could be identified as *official* recommendations by OccupyBoston.
6. **Direct Action: "Crowdfunding"** – In line with our mission to build a job-creating, sharing economy, we began evaluating in detail the differing bills in Congress now claiming to **remove Federal restrictions** that currently forbid us average folks from helping small local businesses do job creation.
- a. Mike showed us his comparison of two bills, while Deborah showed us a comparison of three bills (one from House of Rep., two from the Senate). *But as I write these minutes, the 2 Senate bills have now been melded into a compromise, so at Thursday's meeting we'll all learn the latest developments.*

- b. In that connection, Barbara Roper of the Consumer Federation of America may phone in to our Thursday meeting (from Virginia), and could answer our questions on this matter. Many thanks to Deborah for arranging Barbara's participation.
  - c. Deborah also mentioned the information resource available to us at the Americans for Financial Reform website.-- <http://ourfinancialsecurity.org/>
  - d. Susan reminded us that even if this legislation doesn't pass, it is possible for us to support local businesses by investing in them through simple IOU agreements, as she has occasionally done. IOUs may have different risks and costs compared to the more complex investment arrangements being legislated about, so we need to identify all of those differences, too.
7. **One Issue per month** – Terra suggested that the Occupy movement nationwide should consider coordinating to focus the public's attention and action each month on a particular issue, instead of promoting many different issues at the same time. For example, April could be Foreclosures Month, May could be Bank Regulation Month, etc. This might give the public and the media a sense of Occupy as a more influential presence than currently it might seem to be.
8. **Next Meeting – Thursday March 22 at 7:00pm**  
at One Broadway, Cambridge (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room). Cell-phone contact that day is Mike at (401) 477 3647 if you need help finding the place, or getting through any of the doors.
9. **Facilitators** for our next meeting – Susan and Mike